



**THE NEW JERSEY  
ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE  
COMMISSION**

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**HIGHLIGHTS**  
  
**of**  
  
**THE 1<sup>ST</sup> NJ CONGRESS  
OF ITALIAN AMERICAN  
ORGANIZATIONS**

***UNIFYING THE EFFORTS OF NEW JERSEY'S  
ITALIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS***

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2004  
AT  
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY  
NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY**

# **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL CONGRESS**

## **EVENT GATHERS ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERS**

The New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission held its first annual NJ Congress of Italian American Organizations on Saturday, October 23, 2004 at the Rutgers University Student Center. The event was a success, **bringing together over 500 Italian American community leaders**, including two former governors, Italian government officials, leaders of Italian American organizations, prominent academics and New Jersey elected government officials to discuss issues of importance and to consider ways of working together more productively. The report details the activities at the Congress.



From Left to Right: Governor Florio, Commissioner Bilotti, Commission Chairman Paragano and Governor DiFrancesco.



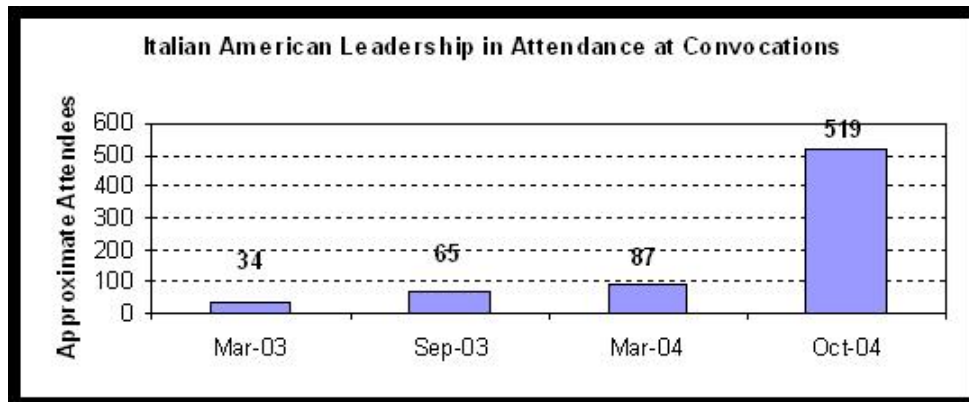
From Left to Right: Chairman Paragano, Vice Consul of Italy and Community Advisory Council Chairman Gargione.

## **COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES SPECIAL PARTICIPATION FROM:**

- Members of the Community Advisory Council of the Commission
- Italian Government – Consul General Antonio Bandini of New York
- Italian Government – Former Consul General Lorenzo Mott of Philadelphia
- New Jersey Government – Assemblymen Paul DiGaetano and Upendra Chivukula
- Rutgers University – Dean Barry Qualls
- UNICO National – National President Michael Marinello
- OSIA National – National President Dr. Joseph Sciamè
- NIAF – Board Member Ms. Rose Cali
- The Coccia Institute for organizing the “Benefits of Unification” Panel
- Associazione Nazionale Carabinieri D’Italia for the Honor Guard
- The Italian American Police Society of New Jersey for the Honor Guard
- The Passaic County Sheriff’s Department for the Honor Guard
- Mr. Louis Presti of NJN for the Documentary Clip
- The Bloomfield Mandolins and Mr. Alex Kariotis for musical performances
- Ms. Josephine Shenman and crew for filming the Congress

## CONGRESS TOPS ATTENDANCE OBJECTIVE

In the Commission's efforts to unify the Italian American community, the Congress was a successful forum to bring various groups and individuals together. The Commission sought 300 to 500 attendees for this 1<sup>st</sup> Congress. As a result of a renewed enthusiasm for issues impacting the Italian American community, over 500 participants came to the Congress from all walks of life and validated the notion of a "Risorgimento" affecting the Italian and Italian American culture and heritage. The table below provides a comparative indication of the large attendance at the October 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress versus the prior three leadership convocations, sponsored by the Commission

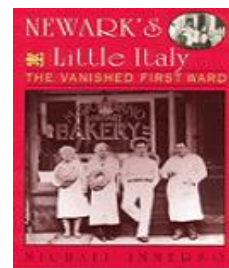


## THREE RESOLUTIONS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Commission proposed three resolutions at the Congress. All of these measures were unanimously accepted at the Congress. Briefly, the first resolution – **Adopting the Principle of Unity** – calls on the Italian Americans in New Jersey to “work together to increase coordination of their efforts...during the coming calendar year”. The second resolution – **Organizing a 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in 2005** – petitions the Commission to “organize a 2<sup>nd</sup> Statewide Congress for Italian American Organizations during the coming year”. The final resolution calls upon the NJ Italian American standing legislators to form a delegation or caucus, in order to represent important issues on behalf of New Jersey's approximately two million Italian Americans.

## EXHIBIT FLOOR AND BOOK SIGNING HELP TO ENHANCE CONGRESS

Over 25 organizations and businesses set up exhibit tables at the Congress and provided literature and information of their groups' activities. Attendees found displays useful, as it helped highlight the efforts of several Italian American Organizations throughout the State. The displays also included information about Italian language programs and study abroad programs for university students. One particular table featured a book signing by the author of *Newark's Little Italy*. The exhibit hall was also marked by book sales of other Italian and Italian American authors.



## ATTENDEES WATCH BRIEF NJN TRAILER ON ITALIAN AMERICANS

During the afternoon portion of the Congress, participants were treated to a 5-minute trailer of a new, New Jersey Italian American Foundation-sponsored documentary highlighting the achievements of Italian Americans in New Jersey. The NJN-produced trailer featured interviews of Italian Americans from a variety of professions and encapsulated their stories of success here in New Jersey. A tentative premier date of the full feature is scheduled for 2005.

## BREAK-OUT SESSIONS TOUCH ON MAJOR TOPICS

The Commission organized eight specific break-out sessions during the Congress. These groups ranging in size from 25 to 75 individuals focused on specific topics affecting the Italian American community. The break-out sessions were selected from a survey of Italian Americans who attended the Commission's March 2004 Convocation.



Featured are Working Session Participants: Commissioner Angelo Moressi and Maria Papaleo, panelist from the Italian Language Session, far left, and Chairman of the Combatting Stereotyping Session Emmanuele Alfano, second from right.

### *The session topics included the following:*

- 1) Italian Heritage for Future Generations
- 2) Combating Stereotyping and Discrimination
- 3) Promoting Italian Culture in New Jersey
- 4) Italian Business Community Relations
- 5) Italian Heritage School Curriculum Program,
- 6) Promoting the Italian Language in New Jersey
- 7) Developing a Scuola Italiana

### 8) Developing Italian American Political Delegation

## TWO PERFORMANCES: A PERFECT BLEND OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

The Congress featured two performances. The Bloomfield Mandolin Orchestra played an assortment of traditional Italian and Italian American music during the lunch session, while Mr. Alex Kariotis electrified the afternoon crowd with his Italian-English rock opera – “Vesti La Giubba”.

## DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS PINPOINTS ITALIANS IN NJ



The New Jersey Italian and Italian American Commission created a preliminary research project detailing a demographic breakdown of Italian Americans in New Jersey. The project was compiled from a variety of sources based the 2000 US Census. At the Congress, a mounted display was created featuring a State map of New Jersey with colored pins indicating the size of that city or town's Italian American community. The Commission will continue to monitor and update statistical information regarding the approximately 2 million Italian Americans in New Jersey.

## **CASA ITALIANA RENDERINGS OFFER A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME**

The Congress publicly showcased the first phase development of a multi-purpose Casa Italiana - a project involving the construction of a 10,000 square foot facility that would house the Commission and the Institute offices, offices for the Rutgers University Departments of Italian and Italian Studies Committee and facilities for the public and students. While architectural renderings and initial contractual arrangements have been on-going, the project is expected to be completed in 2007 for an approximate cost of \$4 million and would include large multimedia public auditorium, conference and lecture rooms, art displays and sculpture garden, audio-visual technology center, multiple office facilities and library and lounges and terraces.

## **YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS PROVIDE MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO CONGRESS**

One of the major groups participating in the Congress was Italia-Oggi, a professional young Italian American association with over 1,000 registered members from the State of New Jersey.



*Members of Italia-Oggi are represented including President Peter Tarquinio, second from left, and Vice-President Lori Mastrosimone, center.*

In addition, over 80 students from throughout the state of New Jersey attended the Congress and contributed important ideas and goals for issues impacting the Italian American community. The Congress offered some of these individuals the opportunity to partake in a break-out session discussing the establishment of a Scuola Italiana. Modeled after the Governor's school in New Jersey, the scuola would incorporate an intensive Italian language program and the activities emphasizing Italian traditions. Many other students voiced their opinion on the curriculum infusion program, youth program and language initiatives for the state.

Given that the Congress took place at Rutgers University, more than 20 Rutgers University students volunteered to help. This assistance ensured that the Congress ran smoothly. The Commission would like to extend its most sincere gratitude for the contribution of these hardworking volunteers.

## **COMMISSION SEEKS SUPPORT FOR BUILDING THE “RISORGIMENTO” EFFORT**

The Commission extends its invitation for you and your organization to participate again in the forthcoming 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations in 2005. If you are interested in participating in the Commission's numerous activities and programs, please do not hesitate to give us a call at 732-932-0670 or visit our website at **[www.njitalia.nj.gov](http://www.njitalia.nj.gov)**. Please use our website to stay informed of forthcoming events.